

**Veterans Services Foundation
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2007**

A meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees was held on Wednesday, April 4, 2007 at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Members Present:

Vincent Burgess	Leroy Gross
Supriya Christopher	John Hanson
Lydia Dudley	Frederic Leigh
Margaret Eure	Ray Smoot
Paul Galanti	

Members Absent:

Frank Louthan, Jr.

Others Present:

Jack Hilgers, Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC), representing
Mason Botts, Chairman
Steven Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning
Anne Atkins, DVS Director of Communications
Armistead Ransone, DVS Director of Administration and Finance
Dan Kemano, DVS Cemetery Manager
Bill Van Thiel, Virginia Veterans Care Center Administrator
Roz Trent, Department of Criminal Justice Services
Don Ferguson, Office of the Attorney General
Roger Sullivan, Va. Veterans Coalition
Roger Overstreet, Va. Veterans Coalition
Tom Briggs, Va. Veterans Coalition

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda;
- Draft Minutes of the December 6, 2006 meeting;
- Talking Points – New Administrator Hired for Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center;
- Summary of DVS Town Hall Meetings;
- DVS FY 07-08 Budget Amendment, as agreed to by the House/Senate Conference Committees;
- JLC 2007 Legislative Agenda, Updated April 4, 2007;
- DVS Administration-Operations Policy 18 – *Cemeteries Donation Fund* (Draft);

- DVS Administration-Operations Policy 7 – *Veterans Care Centers Residents’ Assistance Funds* (Draft);
- Executive Order 19 – Serving Virginia’s Veterans;
- Executive Order 19 Outline of Initiatives;
- House Bill 3139 – Veterans Services Foundation;
- Veterans Services Fund November 26, 2003 thru March 31, 2007 Balance Sheet;
- VSF Requests:
 - Items for Virginia Veterans Care Center;
 - Point Paper on Portraits of Colonel Van Barfoot and Colonel Carl Sitter

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Dudley welcomed everyone and called the meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees to order at 1:10 p.m. The members recited the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag.

Roll Call of Members and Quorum Determination

The roll was called with nine of the ten members recorded as present. A quorum was determined.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the December 6, 2006 meeting were reviewed. A **motion** was made by Dr. Leroy Gross, seconded by Vince Burgess and unanimously passed to approve the minutes as written.

Comments from Chairs

Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)

Chairwoman Dudley referenced the VSF Needs Assessment Survey that was presented at the December 6th meeting. She stated that the assessment is an on-going process and will assist the VSF in future initiatives. She acknowledged Jack Hilgers, Legislative Assistant to Delegate Leo Wardrup and member of the JLC. She thanked Mr. Hilgers for attending and representing Mason Botts, Chairman of the JLC.

Board of Veterans Services (BVS)

Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), Paul Galanti, stated that it had been a very successful 2007 Legislative Session for DVS and for veterans. This was due mostly in part to the prioritized JLC legislative agenda, where veterans issues were addressed with “one voice.” There were no negative votes on any of the legislative initiatives passed by the General Assembly. Chairman Galanti also informed the VSF that the Turbo Vet initiative is moving forward. Turbo Vet is a computerized software application that will assist benefits service representatives in preparing and submitting claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)

In the absence of Chairman Botts, Jack Hilgers, JLC member, reported that the JLC experienced an extremely good legislative year. He distributed the JLC 2007 Legislative Agenda, Updated April 4, 2007, listing the seven prioritized action items and final disposition of legislation.

Mr. Hilgers also gave an update of the March 14th JLC meeting. He emphasized two presentations which were given – a proposal for a Veterans Center, presented by Dr. Steven Danish, Virginia Commonwealth University; and an overview of Veterans Preference in state government, presented by Sara Wilson, Director of the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management.

Mr. Hilgers stated that the JLC 2008 legislative agenda is now being developed. The focus is on both state and federal legislation in support of veterans.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Burgess reported as follows:

DVS Personnel Changes

- Roz Trent had accepted employment with the Department of Criminal Justice Services effective March 26, 2007, and will no longer be working with the DVS and its boards. The Commissioner thanked Mrs. Trent for her services to the Department.
- Lou Deal, Deputy Director of Communications, had accepted employment with a defense contractor. David Harker has been hired to assist in DVS outreach activities, replacing Mr. Deal.
- Donna Shumate, a retired state employee, has been hired on a part-time basis to perform the recruitment and staffing functions for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center.
- Martha Mead has been hired as a part-time employee, assisting Anne Atkins with DVS communications, focusing primarily on the implementation of EO 19
- Sandra Ranicki has been hired as the Administrator for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center. Prior to her current post, Ms. Ranicki was Administrator for Imperial Health Care, operated by HCR-Manocare, and Executive Director for Elizabeth Adam Crump Manor, operated by Beverly Healthcare. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Texas.

DVS Town Hall Meetings

Commissioner Burgess distributed a handout of the Summary of the DVS Town Hall Meetings. DVS held five town hall meetings in early March to get input from veterans and their families. Meetings were held in Fredericksburg, Suffolk, Abingdon, Roanoke and Richmond, and were facilitated by Greg Brittingham, VCU Center for Public Policy. Veterans commented on the need for better communications about benefits, veteran health care, the need for improved benefits at the state level, and the need for support for spouses and family members. Veterans expressed the need to have one single voice to speak for veterans and address issues with the VA, Congress, and other policy makers.

Comments and results of the Town Hall meeting have been posted to the DVS website.

DVS Legislative Update

Commissioner Burgess emphasized two pieces of legislation passed during the 2007 General Assembly session:

- **Veterans Preference (HB2840 and SB1033)** – Legislation was passed that will clarify veterans preference by deleting the word “*consider*” and replacing it with the word “*preference*.” Mrs. Sara Wilson, Director of the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) gave a presentation on Veterans Preference to the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations at its March 14th meeting. Commissioner Burgess and Mrs. Wilson worked together to make sure the language is clear. The bill directs the DHRM to develop guidelines regarding veterans preference and to distribute them to agencies. Discussions have been held with Mrs. Wilson regarding the possibility of hiring a veteran at DHRM to ensure veteran issues are understood.
- **State Procurement (SB1145)** - Prohibits discrimination by public bodies in the solicitation and awarding of contracts and requires public bodies to establish a program to facilitate the participation of businesses owned by special disabled veterans in procurement transactions. The bill also requires the Department of Veterans Services to establish a program to certify businesses owned by special disabled veterans upon requests of owners of such businesses. The bill defines "service disabled veteran" and "service disabled veteran business."

Mrs. Eure suggested that it would be beneficial if small businesses and the Chamber of Commerce could have access to these records, as it would be a valuable employment resource. Commissioner Burgess stated that he would look into this.

Steven Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning, focused members’ attention to the handout that was included in the agenda packets – “DVS FY 07-08 Budget Amendments, as agreed to by the House/Senate Conference Committees.” He reminded members that the 2007 was a short session and the General Assembly met to amend the budget that has passed last year, and that the additional funds approved by the 2007 General Assembly were over and above those funds approved last year.

Mr. Combs also discussed two studies:

- **Long Term Care Feasibility Study:** DVS has partnered with the College of William & Mary and with the First Chesapeake Group to conduct the statewide study on the need for new long term care beds in the Commonwealth.

Dr. Lou Rossiter, a former member of the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee (VCCAC), and Director of the Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy, College of William & Mary, and Dr. Christine Jenson, Research Associate, Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy, College of William & Mary gave a presentation on the Long Term Care Center Feasibility study to the VCCAC at its March 30th meeting.

- Cemetery Study: Dan Kemano, DVS Cemetery Administrator and Steven Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning have met with representatives of the University of Virginia to develop a proposal to conduct a study of the need for additional veterans cemeteries in Virginia (where to be built; timeframe, etc.) The 3rd state veterans cemetery will be located in the Dublin area of Southwest Virginia.

VSF Revised Policies and Procedures

Armistead Ransone distributed the revised drafts of DVS Administration-Operations Policy 18 – *Cemeteries Donation Fund*; and DVS Administration-Operations Policy 7 – *Veterans Care Center Residents' Assistance Funds*. At the December 6, 2006 meeting, Commissioner Burgess had asked that revisions be made regarding the procedures for receiving and administering funds, based on VSF input and discussion.

Don Ferguson questioned if preliminary approval had been obtained from the Auditor of Public Accounts to maintain a fund separate from the Comptroller of Virginia. He stated that the Foundation is charged with administering donations to the Commonwealth, and that any other sub-division of DVS is not authorized to receive such donations. It was decided that further clarity is needed concerning where the monies from donations go and who is ultimately responsible with oversight. Don Ferguson was requested to research this issue and inform DVS and the VSF.

Further discussion ensued. Margaret Eure suggested that rather than wait until the next VSF meeting to discuss this issue, that a call meeting be scheduled to discuss the further revised policy.

New Business

Presentation:

John Hanson was presented with a plaque to recognize his service as Chairman of the VSF from November 2003 to July 2006. A picture of this presentation will be posted to the DVS website.

HB 3139

Chairwoman Dudley focused attention to HB3139 sponsored by Delegate Jack Reid during the 2007 General Assembly. HB3139 would have abolished the Foundation. The bill was “Left in Committee.” VSF member Dr. Gross, and Dr. John Anderson, former chairman of the BVS, testified on behalf of the VSF. Dr. Gross gave a brief summary of his remarks at the committee meeting.

Chairwoman Dudley stated that the VSF had committed to providing a plan of action by November 2007. Dr. Ray Smoot, VSF Vice-Chair, had agreed to chair a sub-committee to develop a plan of action. She asked VSF members interested in the fund raising issue to contact Dr. Smoot to serve on this subcommittee.

Chairwoman Dudley expressed the need for a better system for a needs assessment. She stated that the JLC and the BVS will be an integral part of this process. The VSF must have a dedicated project when asking for donations.

Commissioner Burgess reiterated that the VSF must have a clear document to present to the General Assembly, in particular to the General Laws Sub-Committee #3 – ABC/Gaming, chaired by Delegate Gear. He stressed that the sub-committee expected action from the VSF. He further stressed that if this is not done, there would likely be legislation to abolish the VSF during the next General Assembly session.

Resignation of Chair – End of Membership Term

Chairwoman Dudley informed the VSF that her membership term ends on June 30, 2007, and due to personal reasons, she has decided not seek reappointment. In the interim, Vice-Chairman Ray Smoot would serve until a new chair is elected. Four other VSF members' terms will expire June 30, 2007: Frank Louthan, John Hanson, Margaret Eure, and Ray Smoot.

VSF members thanked Chairwoman Dudley for her leadership and service to the VSF.

Proposals for VSF Approval

The following actions were taken:

A **motion** was made, seconded and unanimously approved to purchase equipment items totaling \$18,000 for residents at the Virginia Veterans Care Center.

A **motion** was made by Margaret Eure, seconded by Frederic Leigh to approve an amount not to exceed \$10,000 be disbursed to the DVS for the purpose of having portraits made of Colonel Van Barfoot and Colonel Carl Sitter to be displayed in the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

John Hanson asked if this purchase was a proper use of state funds. Discussion was entertained. Don Ferguson was asked to research this matter.

A motion was made by John Hanson, seconded by Frederic Leigh and passed unanimously that after review by Mr. Ferguson, the VSF approve an amount not to exceed \$10,000 for purpose of having portraits made of Colonel Van Barfoot and Colonel Carl Sitter to be displayed in the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

Jack Hilgers stated that purchases of this nature fall within the VSF legislative purview.

Veterans Services Fund

The VSF approved the Veterans Service Fund Report – November 28, 2003 through March 31, 2007 showing an ending Unobligated Cash Balance of \$261,484.11.

Public Comment

Roger Sullivan, Va. Veterans Coalition, stated that he had asked Delegate Reid to sponsor the bill to eliminate the Veterans Services Foundation. He further expressed his discontent with the need for the VSF and questioned the validity VSF's existence.

Next Meeting Date/Time

The next meeting of the Veterans Services Foundation will be held on Wednesday, July 18, 2007 – 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Members will be advised of the exact meeting place prior to that time.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.